

KC-130J

Discussion

The KC-130J will be a key component of Marine Air-Ground Task Force operations in the 21st century. Today, Marine KC-130s make up 45 percent of the DoD rotary-wing capable tanker inventory and support numerous Joint and allied aerial refueling requirements. The demand for aerial refueling will increase with 360 additional aerial refuelable MV-22s entering the Marine Corps inventory. Replacement of the aging KC-130 fleet with KC-130J aircraft is necessary to meet the challenge of these increased demands while ensuring the viability and deployability of Marine Corps TACAIR and Assault Support forces well into the century.

The KC-130J's performance features include increased cruise airspeed, night vision compatible interior/exterior lighting, survivability enhancements, high-speed airdrop capability, enhanced rapid ground refueling capability, digital avionics, and powerful propulsion systems. The enhanced capabilities of the KC-130J eliminates fifteen of the KC-130F/R top readiness degraders, results in lower life cycle costs, and negates the requirement for costly Service Life Extension Programs for the in-service fleet.

Marine Corps Position

The acquisition of the KC-130J represents a tremendous increase in lift and refueling capabilities for the Marine Corps. The KC-130J, when combined with the increased capabilities of the MV-22 and the JSF, will increase the operational reach of the Marine Corps.

Marine Corps Aviation Recapitalization

With the realities of a fiscally constrained budget, one of the Marine Corps' greatest challenges is maintaining a balance between modernizing legacy systems and investing in systems for the future. The Marine Corps has initiated several significant recapitalization programs that will ensure aviation will remain a force multiplier for the MAGTF commander. The Marine Corps has made the KC-130J, MV-22 Osprey, and Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) priorities in this recapitalization effort. Once acquired, these assets will enable Marine aviation to continue to provide the MAGTF with the capability of executing all future operational concepts.